

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BONN 11435 01 OF 02 191043Z

12

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 IO-14 SAM-01 SAJ-01 DRC-01 /118 W

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R 191017Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

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INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, GW,

SUBJECT: SPD TROIKA--SCHMIDT, BRANDT AND WEHNER

SUMMARY: THERE HAS BEEN PRESS SPECULATION RECENTLY THAT SCHMIDT AND BRANDT ARE INTERESTED IN GETTING RID OF WEHNER AS SPD BUNDESTAG PARTY CHAIRMAN. IT IS GENERALLY THOUGHT, HOWEVER, THAT WEHNER WILL RETAIN HIS POSITION THROUGH THE 1975 PARTY CONVENTION, AND BEYOND THAT UNTIL AFTER THE 1976 ELECTION. END SUMMARY

1. THE PRESENT SITUATION IN THE SPD LEADERSHIP--DIFFER-
ENT MEN AS CHANCELLOR (SCHMIDT), PARTY CHAIRMAN

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PAGE 02 BONN 11435 01 OF 02 191043Z

(BRANDT), AND BUNDESTAG PARTY LEADER (WEHNER)--IS

WITHOUT PRECEDENT. BOTH SCHUMACHER AND OLLENHAUER WERE AT THE SAME TIME PARTY CHAIRMAN, BUNDESTAG PARTY LEADER AND CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE. BRANDT'S NOMINATION AS CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE TEMPORARILY PRODUCED A DIVISION OF OFFICE, WITH OLLENHAUER LEFT IN THE POST OF PARTY CHAIRMAN, BUT AFTER OLLENHAUER'S DEATH, BRANDT TOOK OVER THE CHAIRMANSHIP AND CONTINUED IN BOTH ROLES AFTER HE ACTUALLY BECAME CHANCELLOR.

2. FOLLOWING BRANDT'S RESIGNATION, BOTH HE AND SCHMIDT HAVE GONE ON RECORD THAT THE ROLES OF HEAD OF GOVERNMENT AND HEAD OF PARTY EACH REQUIRE THE FULL-TIME WORK OF ONE MAN. BRANDT HAS STATED THAT HE INTENDS TO BE A CANDIDATE FOR RE-ELECTION AS PARTY CHAIRMAN. WEHNER HAS MADE KNOWN HIS INTENTION TO PUT HIMSELF UP AGAIN FOR RE-ELECTION AS BUNDESTAG PARTY CHIEF.

3. THERE IS DOUBTLESS CONSIDERABLE TENSION IN THIS TROIKA ARRANGEMENT. RELATIONS BETWEEN BRANDT AND WEHNER HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY CHILLY IN RECENT MONTHS. WEHNER'S PERFORMANCE IN MOSCOW DURING HIS VISIT THERE LAST YEAR WAS EMBARRASSING TO BRANDT, AND WEHNER NEVER CONCEALED HIS CRITICISM OF BRANDT'S LEADERSHIP SHORTCOMINGS. IN ADDITION, ALTHOUGH ALL THE FACTS ARE NOT YET OUT, IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT WEHNER PLAYED A CRUCIAL ROLE IN URGING BRANDT TO RESIGN IN EARLY MAY. BRANDT'S RELATIONS WITH SCHMIDT HAVE NEVER BEEN PARTICULARLY WARM, AND IT SEEMS REASONABLE TO ASSUME A CERTAIN UNEASINESS IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE NEW CHANCELLOR AND THE OLD. SCHMIDT'S RECENT APPOINTMENT OF BAHR, A BRANDT INTIMATE, AS MINISTER FOR DEVELOPMENT AID, HAS PROBABLY DONE SOMETHING TO EASE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO MEN, AND IT IS THOUGHT THAT WEHNER WAS OPPOSED TO BAHR'S APPOINTMENT PRECISELY BECAUSE HE SAW IT AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN BRANDT AND SCHMIDT WHICH MADE HIS OWN POSITION LESS SECURE. ON THE OTHER HAND, SCHMIDT AND BRANDT DIFFER IN THEIR APPROACHES TO THE DIFFICULT

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PAGE 01 BONN 11435 02 OF 02 191040Z

12
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 11435

ISSUE OF THE LEADERSHIP'S RELATIONS WITH THE PARTY'S LEFT, SPECIFICALLY THE YOUNG SOCIALISTS (JUSOS), BRANDT FAVORING A TOLERANT LINE, SCHMIDT COMING DOWN IN FAVOR OF INCREASED PARTY DISCIPLINE, EVEN AT THE RISK OF LOSING THE SUPPORT OF THE MORE RADICAL ELEMENTS.

4. THESE RELATIONSHIPS AND ISSUES CLEARLY CONTAIN A GOOD DEAL OF COMBUSTIBLE MATERIAL. HOWEVER, THERE ARE LIMITING FACTORS, CHIEFLY THE NEED FOR THE SPD TO MAINTAIN COHESION AND REGAIN INITIATIVE IN THE PERIOD BEFORE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 BONN 11435 02 OF 02 191040Z

THE 1976 ELECTIONS. WEHNER IS DIFFICULT TO GET ALONG WITH, AND DOUBTLESS SCHMIDT, LIKE OTHERS, WILL HAVE HIS TROUBLES WITH HIM. BUT WEHNER IS TOUGH AND RESOURCEFUL, AND HAS THE MANAGEMENT SENSE AND CONTROL THE PARTY NEEDS IN THE BUNDESTAG AND IN ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS GENERALLY. THERE IS NO APPARENT REPLACEMENT FOR HIM EITHER.

5. THE MOST RECENT ISSUE OF "DER SPIEGEL" GOES SO FAR AS TO SAY THAT "THE WEHNER ERA IS NEARING ITS END", BUT

THIS IS QUESTIONABLE. SCHMIDT HAS GONE OUT OF HIS WAY
IN AN INTERVIEW WITH AP TO REJECT THE SPIEGEL SPECULA-
TION THAT HE AND BRANDT WANT WEHNER'S RESIGNATION.
"DIE ZEIT" SEEMS NEARER THE MARK WHEN IT SAYS THAT THE
SPD WILL HAVE TO PUT UP WITH WEHNER IF HE CAN PUT UP
WITH THE RESERVATIONS THAT EXIST ABOUT HIM IN THE
PARTY. AND, IT ADDS, IF THE SPD UNDER SCHMIDT REMAINS
IN POWER, PERHAPS WEHNER WILL AGAIN BE CELEBRATED AS
THE MAN WHO DROVE THEM TO VICTORY. IT WOULD SEEM
LIKELY THAT, DESPITE FRICTIONS, WEHNER WILL RETAIN HIS
POST AS SPD BUNDESTAG PARTY LEADER THROUGH THE 1975
PARTY CONGRESS AND, BEYOND THAT, UNTIL THE 1976 ELECTION.
BY THEN HE WILL BE 70, AND MORE RIPE FOR RETIREMENT THAN
HE IS NOW.
CASH

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